


FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT



Presentation to Earth Science and Applications from Space Strategic Roadmap Committee First Meeting, La Jolla, CA

P. Diane Rausch
NASA Advisory Committee Management Officer
Director, Advisory Committee Management Division
Office of External Relations
NASA Headquarters

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What is a FACA Advisory Committee?



- **1972 Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) - Public Law 92-463**
 - Provide advice that is relevant, objective, open to public
 - Act promptly to complete work
 - Comply with reasonable cost controls and recordkeeping requirements
- **Established by Statute, the President or Federal agency, or “utilized” by the President or Federal agency**
 - To obtain advice or recommendations for the President or agency
 - Contains at least one non-Federal employee

What Must All FACA Committees Have?



Charter

- Top Federal agency official must decide that an advisory committee is essential to the performance of a duty or responsibility of that Agency
- Charter sets out committee mission/responsibilities/costs; typically has a 2-year duration; automatically terminates unless renewed
- Agency head signs the Charter after GSA approval; then it is filed with Congress

GSA Approval

- The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is responsible for approving all proposed charters for FACA committees
- GSA manages Government-wide ceiling on FACA committees

What must all FACA Committees have?



- **CMO** ☐
 - Each Federal agency required to have a Committee Management Officer (CMO)
 - Each Agency head must appoint a senior official to this statutorily-mandated position
 - Role to provide management oversight of all Agency advisory committees, ensure FACA compliance, liaison/annual reporting to GSA
 - Charters new FACA committees
 - Signs all Federal Register notices (establishment/meeting)
 - Works closely with Office of General Counsel on ethics issues
 - Works closely with Agency DFO's on policies, procedures, issues

What Must All FACA Committees Have?



DFO

- Each FACA advisory committee must have a a Designated Federal Official (DFO) who:
 - Calls, attends and adjourns meetings
 - Approves agendas
 - Maintains required official records of committee, including minutes, membership and cost records
 - NASA uses various titles for its DFO's (e.g., executive director, executive secretary) but responsibilities are the same

What Must All FACA Committees Have?



Members

- Membership must be “*fairly balanced*” with regard to points of view to be represented and the functions to be performed.
- Anyone can nominate members for advisory committee membership; Federal agency head appoints them.
- Two types: “Special Government Employees” (SGE’s) and “Representatives.”
- SGE’s must file required financial disclosure forms (“450’s”) for review by the Office of General Counsel.

Why Does FACA Require Public Meetings?



Public Meetings

- Goals of the FACA statute include:
 - Reducing inappropriate influence on government decisions
 - Eliminating government decision made behind closed doors
 - Improving public confidence in decision making
 - Allowing public contemporaneous access to decision process
 - Ensuring positive public perception of Federal agency decision-making
 - “Good government”

Public Meetings – cont'd



- **FACA is a public access, not a public participation statute.**
 - All deliberations of a FACA committee seeking to reach “consensus” on advice to be given to the Agency must occur in a public meeting.
 - GSA says “consensus” requires a quorum:
 - Quorum equals 1/2 of number of members, plus 1
 - No requirement that “consensus” be reached in any particular public meeting.

Public Meetings – cont'd



To Assure Public Access:

- **Notice of meeting:** Time, location and agenda – must be published in the Federal Register at least 15 calendar days before the scheduled meeting.
- **Accessible meeting location:** But Agency is not required to accommodate all of the public.
- **Posting committee information on a Website:** Including minutes and documents considered at each meeting.
- **Public may submit documents/written statements:** Committee is free to use public input as it sees fit.
- **Teleconferences are possible:** But need public access, e.g., separate room with speakerphone and call-in line. Also need Federal Register notice.

Public Meetings – cont'd



A Few Special Exceptions to Public Meeting Requirement:

- National security
- Trade secrets, or commercial or financial information
- Criminal investigatory records
- Issuance of subpoenas or litigation strategy
- Specifically exempted by statute
- Activities not covered by FACA (e.g., purely administrative meetings)
- Closing a meeting must be planned in advance, and cleared with Agency CMO and Office of General Counsel

Questions?



FACA: ☐

P. Diane Rausch

Advisory Committee Management Officer (ACMO)

Office of External Relations

NASA Headquarters

202-358-4510

Ethics/Financial ☐

Disclosure: ☐

R. Andrew Falcon

Alternate Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO)

Office of General Counsel

NASA Headquarters

202-358-2082